

*An Essay*

1808

NO 2

*Investigation of the different opinions in  
favour of the contagious nature of Remittent  
and intermittent Fevers, together with an  
inquiry into the laws of miasma &c*

*By*

*Robert C. Grayson of Virginia  
Honorary member of the Philadelphia  
Medical Society, and member of the  
Linnean - - - - -*



*[Faint, mostly illegible handwritten text, possibly a letter or document, with significant water damage and staining.]*

*Madam*  
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*To the*  
*John*  
*Trustee*  
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(2)  
An  
Inaugural Dissertation  
for  
The Degree  
of  
Doctor of Medicine  
Submitted  
To the examination of  
John M'Dowel LL.D. Provost  
(The  
Trustees and Medical Professors  
of the  
University of Pennsylvania  
on the twenty seventh day of April  
1800

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## An Essay &amp;c.

Perhaps no subject, among the many which have agitated the medical world, has excited greater attention & discussion, than that of contagion. Such is the disposition of man to attribute effects to causes of an obscure & unknown nature, that Physicians of the enlightened age, have imputed all that class of diseases, a knowledge of the causes of which, involves some difficulties, to one common cause, contagion. On this subject we find the concluding opinions of Gennepius, Aegius Lancisi, Lind of Windsor, Clegg, & Black. From each of whom, my borrowings, as one sitting in attendance to the Laws of a Librarian, shall be, to make a few quotations, together with an

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1<sup>st</sup> Dr. Zimmerman, observes that putrid fevers are produced by exhalations from putrid animal substances, & that a malignant fever was produced by a small heap of Flax, which proved fatal to the family in which it commenced, & afterwards spread its contagion thro' the whole County.

In this author we find a position, substituted for both correct reasoning & incontrovertible facts. He asserts, "that its contagion spread thro' a whole County," but omits telling us whether the inhabitants of this county were exposed individually to the influence of this contagion, or whether its ravages were commenced at the same time on numbers who had not come within the limits, consigned to the influence of contagion. - Dr. Hagarth's experiments on the contagion of small pox, are sufficient to answer

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E. By Dr. Hargens, opinion, appear to have  
 been mistaken for contagious Fevers. His answer,  
 "The Fevers which prevail annually at Cork  
 are owing to the exhalation of putrid Blood from  
 Slaughter Houses, particularly after the sum-  
 mer rains." In answer to this, it's only necessary  
 to consider the regular periods at which these  
 diseases appeared & disappeared, together with  
 their place of attack. If in the first place,  
 they arose from a contagious source, why did they  
 not make their appearance at all ordinary seasons  
 of the year? Would they have been accompanied  
 only by the approach of Fall & removed by that  
 of Winter? Would they also not have commenced  
 their attack upon the Butchers, who of neces-  
 sity were most exposed to their noxious effects?  
 the very reverse, of this, we find to be the fact.

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has this opinion been set  
forth, in the E. A. of the Ameri-  
cical Transactions, that it would be  
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3<sup>rd</sup> Dr. Cleggett has reported that the  
case is entirely healed and requires no further treatment.



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of the disease, & the nature of the disease, at which  
time, many of the cases are cured, & the disease  
is cured, & the nature of the disease is cured.  
By the experiments it is plainly proved that  
the disease is made by the remote cause  
of a disease may not discover itself for  
some time after the cause itself has been  
abstracted. This is still further illustrated  
by Dr. Jackson in his thesis on the influence  
of the force of disease. "He informs us that  
"miasmata arising from the air of marshes, &  
if ever make their appearance in less than  
seven days after such exposure, & that  
some have passed as many as ten days  
before the disease was completely formed."  
Dr. He Clark relates the case of an old lady  
who being affected with a disease, & the

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John of St. Paul, in a sermon on the same subject  
recommends to us, in coming to a  
decision, to let some honest man sit  
by us, and say "As an answer will be made  
me, so will I give it. This last week, in the  
presence of some of that house."

Will my resolution been engaged in, and I  
to induce to a few of those resolutions. This  
has been assured in substance of the  
it now becomes necessary that I should  
be initiated both of contagion & the disease.  
With this view, I shall in the first place  
explain what I understand by contagion,  
& in the second attempt to define the disease  
together with the Laws which it appears  
to observe in its involution. This will be  
the Contagion, from Contagion L. is  
disease excited by a disease of

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From the reflection it is at once discovered that  
there is an immediate contact between  
the healthy & diseased body, necessary to the  
propagation of contagious diseases. Again  
it may be urged that the small pox is com-  
municated thro' the medium of the atmo-  
sphere, or without any direct contact  
between the healthy & diseased bodies. To this  
we answer that the matter of the small pox  
being propagated of great volatility, and  
for a certain distance is strongly im-  
pregnated, by the evaporation of it more agree-  
able principles, the surrounding atmosphere  
is able to take effect on them & a more direct





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which the evening view is proper  
 elimination to all contradictions  
 which is the effect of the heat of day  
 upon the moisture of our Earth, and then  
 when in that state, Paper is sent to  
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 of evening. If then Minstrel  
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fumes, which depends upon their greater or  
 lesser combination with heat; may not  
 its Laws be reduced to the following? -  
 That, when it is eliminated from a collec-  
 tion of matter, which is in a state of pro-  
 trification, from being greatly rarified, it  
 may be considered as in a state of dilution  
 which renders it incapable of acting on  
 those exposed to it. But, that, when it has  
 condensed, & comes in contact with a man,  
 soon too dense, for its further existence  
 in the Airiform state, it becomes conden-  
 sed & precipitates in a state of such con-  
 centration as to act on those persons  
 who may then be exposed to it. These are  
 the principles upon which, I would explain  
 the fact relative to the Fever which prevailed  
 near Winchester as also that related by

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St. Clark, of an old Lady, who, was taken  
with an Intermittent fever, tho' confined  
up three pair of Stairs & as he supposed  
without the reach of Miasmas.

Having thus brought to a conclusion a course  
& imperfect apology, it would be offering  
violence to my feelings, not to express the  
diverliest & entirest sentiments of gratitude, to the  
People as in this Society, for the many  
advantages which I have derived from  
their industry & Labors, & that their con-  
-currence for the investigation of truth  
& removal of error, may be crowned with  
the greatest success, is the anxious  
desire of their most obliged & humble  
Servant